

Ship Creek

Anchorage Wildlife Viewing Hot Spots



directions

From downtown Anchorage, take 3rd Street as it winds downward toward the Alaska Railroad station. Pass the railroad (on your left) and turn left on C Street. Take Whitney Road (east) and watch for a stop sign and dam over Ship Creek. For the Elmendorf State Hatchery, take the Glenn Highway east about 1.5 miles from downtown. Turn left on Reeve Boulevard, then right on Post Road. Watch for the parking area on your right.

tips & cautions

Salmon viewing area hours are from late May through September, 8:00 AM until 10:00 PM.

Never walk on mudflats! Tides move extremely fast. An unwary adventurer can easily get trapped in the sticky mud. Do not disturb, chase, or feed shorebirds or ducks. Check with the local Fish & Game office for fishing regulations at Ship Creek. For more information contact: 907-267-2233

Mew gulls' plumage changes as they age and during different seasons, including breeding. Breeding mew gulls have white chests, gray feathers, and white flecks along a darker tail.



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Photo by Elmendorf Hatchery Staff

King salmon, with plump, reddish bodies, congregate in the waters at Ship Creek.

Ship Creek is a favorite local fishing spot and good shorebird-viewing site in the industrial environment of the port near downtown Anchorage. With a backdrop of the Anchorage skyline, the mud, sedge flats, and ocean-fed waters provide not only salmon runs but habitat for plovers, sandpipers, godwits, and other migrating shorebirds.

Ship Creek runs through the Port of Anchorage as well as near the ocean waters of Cook Inlet. High tides combined with the marshy mudflats close to roadways provide excellent shorebird viewing. A variety of shorebirds—including the hudsonian godwit, turnstones, surfbirds, semipalmated, western and least sandpipers—are often seen during spring and fall migrations. From the road to the public boat launch, the expanse of mudflats offers views of birds as they run to and from the waves. Large flocks of flying shorebirds often resemble a glittering sheet—as if their shallow dives and sharp turns were all from one form, not from hundreds and sometimes thousands of birds. Low tides offer occasional views of these tiny creatures flitting along the mud flats or flying in groups just above the shore. High tides push shorebirds closer to shore. When the tide begins to recede,

large numbers can be visible near roads and parking areas.

Two miles upstream from the mouth of the creek is the Elmendorf State Hatchery. The lake and adjacent pond provide salmon viewing in the spring and summer. King salmon are present from late May through July, and coho salmon from August through mid-September. Another good place to view spawning salmon is the spillway a short distance upstream from the highway overpass.

While many animals hibernate or seek warmer places during Alaska's winters, a few hardy birds, like the common merganser, green-winged teal, and bufflehead may be seen toughin' it out through the snowy season at the pond near the hatchery.

contacts & resources

Alaska's Watchable Wildlife Program:
www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov
Sport Fish Division, Alaska Department of Fish & Game:
www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/sf_home.cfm